

§ 727.1

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AUTHORITY: 5 U.S.C. 301; 10 U.S.C. 5031 and 5148; 32 CFR 700.206 and 700.1202.

SOURCE: 38 FR 6026, Mar. 6, 1973, unless otherwise noted.

§ 727.1 Purpose.

A legal assistance program providing needed legal advice and assistance to military personnel and their dependents has been in operation in the naval service since 1943. The program has improved the morale of personnel and reduced disciplinary problems since its inception. The purpose of this part is to provide guidelines for the continuation of the program.

§§ 727.2–727.4 [Reserved]

§ 727.5 Persons eligible for assistance.

Legal assistance shall be available to members of the Armed Forces of the United States and their dependents, and military personnel of allied nations serving in the United States, its territories or possessions. The service is intended primarily for the benefit of personnel during active service, but is to be extended to retired military personnel, their dependents, survivors of members of the Armed Forces who would be eligible were the service member alive, and in overseas areas, to civilians, other than local-hire employees, who are in the employ of, serving with, or accompanying the U.S. Armed Forces, and their dependents, when and if the workload of the office renders such service feasible.

§ 727.6 Functions of legal assistance officers.

(a) *Basic duties.* A legal assistance officer, while performing legal assistance duties, in addition to performing any other duties which may be assigned to him:

(1) Shall counsel, advise, and assist persons eligible for assistance in connection with their personal legal problems, or refer such persons to a civilian lawyer as provided in § 727.9.

(2) Shall serve as advocate and counsel for persons eligible for assistance in connection with their personal legal problems and may prepare and sign correspondence on behalf of a client, negotiate with another party or his lawyer, and prepare all types of legal documents, including pleadings.

(3) Shall, in appropriate cases and under guidelines prescribed in the Manual of the Judge Advocate General contemplating agreements or liaison with appropriate civilian bar officials, serve as advocate and counsel for, and provide full legal representation including representation in court to, persons eligible for assistance in connection with their personal legal problems.

(4) Shall, subject to the direction of the senior legal assistance officer of the command, establish contact and maintain liaison with local bar organizations, lawyer referral services, legal aid societies, and other local organizations through which the services of civilian lawyers may be made available to military personnel and their dependents.

(5) Shall supervise the personnel and operation of the legal assistance office in accordance with good legal practice and the policies and guidance provided by the Judge Advocate General.

(6) Shall advise persons with complaints of discrimination on policies and procedures under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and SECNAV Instruction 5350.5 series.

(b) *Nature of assistance.* Legal assistance officers and administrative and clerical personnel assigned to legal assistance offices perform legal assistance duties as official duties in the capacity of an officer or an employee of the United States. Persons performing legal assistance duties, however, should not mislead those with whom they may deal into believing that their views or opinions are the official views or opinions of, approved by, or binding on, the Department of the Navy or the United States.

(c) *Duty to client.* A legal assistance officer should exercise his independent

professional judgment on behalf of his client within the standards promulgated in the Code of Professional Responsibility and the specific limitations imposed in this part.

(d) *Professional legal advice.* Only legal assistance officers are authorized to render services that call for the professional judgment of a lawyer. The legal assistance officer may delegate tasks to clerks, secretaries, and other lay personnel provided the officer maintains a direct relationship with the client, supervises the delegated work, and has complete professional responsibility for the work product. Services that call for the professional judgment of a lawyer include, but are not limited to, the preparation of wills and powers of attorney, advising personnel with respect to legal rights and relationships, negotiating contracts, and other matters requiring an educated ability to relate the general body and philosophy of law to a specified legal problem of a client. Guidance in this matter may be had from various official sources including the ethical considerations under Canon 3 of the Code of Professional Responsibility of the American Bar Association and particularly EC 3-2, 3-5, 3-6, and DR 3-101(A).

[41 FR 26863, June 30, 1976, as amended at 47 FR 41561, Sept. 21, 1982]

§ 727.7 Limitations on service provided.

(a) *Assistance in official military matters.* Legal assistance duties are separate and apart from the responsibilities of a trial counsel, defense counsel, or other officer involved in the processing of courts-martial, nonjudicial punishment, administrative boards or proceedings, investigations, or other official military matters. Frequently, a serviceman accused or suspected of an offense or of conduct leading to administrative proceedings will request advice from the legal assistance officer. In such a case, he should be advised of the proper procedures for obtaining counsel or advice. This limitation does not prevent the assignment of the same officer to perform the functions of a legal assistance officer and the functions of a defense counsel, counsel for a respondent, or counsel for a party.

(b) *Domestic-relations cases.* In domestic-relations cases, a legal assistance officer may, with the knowledge and consent of both parties, and where neither party is represented by counsel, consult both parties without impropriety.

(c) *Nonlegal advice.* The legal assistance officer, while giving legal advice, may also determine that the client needs or desires advice on related nonlegal matters. The legal assistance officer should provide legal advice only, or defer giving such advice, and refer the client to an appropriate person or agency for such nonlegal counseling. The legal assistance officer should establish and maintain a working relationship with those individuals who are qualified to provide nonlegal counseling services.

(d) *Proceedings involving the United States.* A legal assistance officer shall not advise on, assist in, or become involved with, individual interests opposed to or in conflict with the United States without the specific approval of the Judge Advocate General. In this connection see also 18 U.S.C. 201, and 18 U.S.C. 205.

(e) *Telephone inquiries.* In the absence of unusual or compelling circumstances, legal advice should not be given over the telephone.

[41 FR 26863, June 30, 1976]

§ 727.8 Confidential and privileged character of service provided.

All information and files pertaining to the persons served will be treated as confidential and privileged in the legal sense as outlined in Canon 4 of the Code of Professional Responsibility, as opposed to confidential in the military sense of security information. These privileged matters may not be disclosed to anyone by personnel rendering the service, except upon the specific permission of the person concerned, and disclosure thereof may not be lawfully ordered by superior military authority. This restriction does not prohibit providing the nonprivileged statistical data required by § 727.13 of this part. Protection of the confidences of a legal assistance client is essential to the proper functioning of the legal assistance program in order